

## FREE CINEMA

### TOGETHER

THIS fifty-minute story of the docklands of London's East End was directed by a young Italian girl whose previous work has included two adaptations from Kafka. The two professional actors in it, the leading roles played by two Englishmen, Michael Andrews and Edmund Purdom. All other parts are taken by people of the East End, in whose streets, pub, markets and lodging houses the film was entirely shot and recorded. The poetry of this highly original picture is the poetry of the ordinary, the hard and the humble: a contemporary tragedy of innocence.

*Directed by Lorenza Mazzetti. Story: Denis Horne.*



### HOMME DON'T ALLOW

THE Wood Green Jazz Club meets in the spare room at the "Fishmonger's Arms". *Homme Don't Allow* presents an evening at the club to which, after a day's work, comes a bunch of Teddy boys and their girls, a group of typists and their young men, a party of Mayfairites out on a swishing spree. Chris Barber's Jazz Band provides the music to which they sit on the piano slabs, dancing their joy of living without self-consciousness or inhibition.

*Directed by Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson. Camera: Walter Lassally.*



### O DREAMLAND

PICTURE through the Ages" and the money-spinning party of Frank Laine; isolated beans and like taxes, yodelling was dances in the Swiss Alps. Gardening—these combine to provide amusement for London holiday-makers down for a day by the sea. This drowsy picture of a South Coast Fun Fair comments on the stuff of which some contemporaneous dreams are made.

*Directed by Lindsay Anderson. Camera: John Fletcher.*

# The FREE CINEMA Hoax

Denis Horne

These films are free in the sense that their statements are entirely personal. Though their moods and subjects differ, the concern of each of them is with some aspect of life as it is lived in this country today.

Look at Britain! is not just an invitation. It is a challenge. Of course in a programme like this we can give only the merest suggestion of the richness which offers itself to artists (not only film makers) at every street corner, under every roof in this country. The humour, the eccentricity, the squalor and the poetry—all the poetry of living which cannot fail, and which is the stuff that art is made of.

Have any of the National Film Theatre programmes over the past few years made a mark like those of Free Cinema? We doubt it. For these have been something more than mere interesting compilations of new documentaries. They have represented the birth, and the growth, of the only creative movement of British cinema since the war. And this movement has been an important part of the cultural renaissance of the last three years—the years of the Royal Court theatre, the "Universities and Left Review" and "The Uses of Literacy"; of "Declaration" and Aldermaston and the Angry Young Men.

British Film Institute Circulars.

ABOUT TWO WEEKS before the National Film Theatre in London presented a programme of films in February 1956 under the general title of Free Cinema a pamphlet was circulated to critics, journalists and theatre subscribers. This pamphlet, besides being a kind of manifesto of the Free Cinema movement, claimed to give an objective account of how the first films were made and of the careers and ideas of the declared makers as evidence of an alleged similarity in production and artistic approach.

It is my contention that a Free Cinema movement never really existed, and that its recognition by critics, journalists and the public was the result of a successful publicity stunt. To prove this, it is not necessary to look at much more than this pamphlet, printed and circulated by one Alex Jacobs under the supervision of Lindsay Anderson. It consisted of ten duplicated pages and was entitled Free Cinema. It was dated February 5th-8th, 1956. On the second page, headed 'Facts at a Glance' there were several statements which were either untrue or partly true or were debatable matters based on opinion: (1) All (the directors) are university graduates. (2) Everybody connected with the films worked without salaries. (3) All the directors are recognized film-critics as well as film-

makers. (4) They (the films) were not made together but came together because of their common attitude.

These statements can be briefly corrected: (1) Lorenza Mazzetti, though it has nothing to do with her work in *Together*, was not a university graduate. (2) For a part of the time during the shooting of *Together* a professional cameraman was paid union rates. Crowd and occasional actors were also paid. Lorenza Mazzetti and I were working on a production contract with the British Film Institute under which we were to receive a percentage of the net returns. (3) Lorenza Mazzetti was not a 'recognized film-critic', though it is obvious that even if she had been it would have been irrelevant to her talents as a filmmaker. (4) The films did not come together of their own accord, as is suggested, nor were they made in complete dissociation. *Together* was made quite independently in the spring of 1954 by Lorenza Mazzetti and myself. We then had no knowledge of Lindsay Anderson's film *O Dreamland*, but as we met him from time to time at the British Film Institute he came to know all about ours. There was then no suggestion of a 'movement', nor were Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson making a film. Reisz was with the Ford motor company and Richardson was then producing plays at the Royal Court theatre. It was only when Anderson entered the making of *Together* as editor in 1955 that the idea of Free Cinema suggested itself. His own documentary film *O Dreamland* was already finished. As editor of our film he was in a position to tailor it to fit his ideas for a movement, and the production of *Momma Don't Allow* completed the necessary trinity. The alleged 'common attitude' of the three films was evidently not a 'fact' but an opinion and one that would not stand up to examination as may be seen by considering not only the films themselves but how they were really made. It then appears that the attitudes of the three are distinct, but the writers of the pamphlet were able to gloss over the obvious differences by concentrating attention on such irrelevancies as the similarity in the social status of their makers: hence the self-conscious parading of words like 'graduates', 'critics', 'Southbank', and 'filmmakers'.

I do not think any film-critic would deny that the attitude of *Together* is fundamentally different from the attitude of *O Dreamland* and that both attitudes are different from that of *Momma Don't Allow*. It is enough to compare and consider the sequences of the working-class characters while they are enjoying themselves. In *Together* the camera is uncritical, affectionate, dreamy, intimate and warm. In *O Dreamland* it is critical, full of distaste, objective, cold. *Together* was conceived and filmed as a lyric short story. *O Dreamland* was conceived and filmed as documentary and edited as a satire. One has only to contrast the shot of the gnome-like little dock worker trying to tell a story to one of the deaf-mutes in *Together* with the satirical shot of the sprawled tea-drinkers in *O Dreamland*. To state that two films of such obvious differences in their fundamental approach had a 'com-

mon attitude' was critical blindness or self-interested charlatanism. Again, the attitude of *Momma Don't Allow* was neither lyrical nor critical. It showed a tolerant if somewhat amused acceptance of all classes, was morally neutral and could claim to be, perhaps alone of the three films, made as a genuine documentary. However, the word 'documentary' in relation to Free Cinema needs discussion. The point that matters here is that none of the three films had a 'common attitude' and at least two of them were made in totally different circumstances.

The attempt to fasten a false homogeneity on the films is continued on page four of the pamphlet. First of all the film *Together* is put down as the unaided work of Lorenza Mazzetti. Although this was not true it was regarded as necessary in order to keep up the appearance of unity as I had written dissociating myself from Anderson's proposal to include *Together* in a Free Cinema programme. In point of fact, the film had been made by two people and, as the writer of the scenario, executive producer and associate director from the first conception of the film until the moment it fell into the hands of Lindsay Anderson, I am in the best position to describe how it was actually made. This is in no way meant to detract from the recognition accorded Lorenza Mazzetti by the critics, but she would be the last to claim that she made the film alone, and the authors of the pamphlet were fully aware that she did not make it alone.\*

In the next paragraph the note repeats the inaccurate statement that none of the actors, directors, technicians were paid for working on the films and adds that 'most of the work was done in spare time, in evenings, or week-ends.' To give the second part of this statement a semblance of truth the writers were forced to garble other facts about the making of *Together*. For example, on page eight there is a reference to Lorenza Mazzetti's visits to England in which, by eliminating altogether the period of six months during which the film was actually shot and the further period of six months during which it was deposited with the British Film Institute while we were waiting for the money to edit the sound track, it is made to appear that editing and shooting were done during the one period, namely when Lindsay Anderson was present and when the conditions referred to as 'spare time, evenings or week-ends' were undoubtedly true: Anderson required nine months to put a sound track on the film.

But in fact far from being made in 'spare time' *Together* had been made on a daily eight hour working schedule over a period of two months with interruptions for bad weather. It followed a scenario and shooting script of eighty pages approved by the British Film Institute, and the rushes were viewed from time to time by members of a committee when suggestions were made for modifying or improving sequences. It was the same committee that finally voted not to accept our finished version of the film on

\* See letter by Lorenza Mazzetti to the editor of "Sight and Sound" (Winter 1956-57).

the ground that it was incomplete. In this the committee behaved in no way that I can see which differed from that of an ordinary film production company. I shall return to this point when considering the implication that Free Cinema was also a movement away from producer-control. It is enough to state here that not only had I thrown up all other work to give the production my undivided attention, but six months of full-time production were put into the film by Lorenza Mazzetti and men from the writing of the first scenario to the delivery of nine cans of mute rough-cut to the British Film Institute. Spare time, evenings and weekends?

Later is the statement that 'John Fletcher whose name is prominent on the credit titles of all three films 'recorded' the entire sound track of *Together* on his own tape machine'. This blandly overlooks the use in the film of my own recordings of the voices of the children and of conversations and background noise and talk in the pubs. The deliberate suppression of details such as this was undoubtedly necessary to preserve the appearance of unity throughout the making, though it might be thought to be in some disharmony with the assertion on page one that the 'films were not made together'.

Finally on the same page is the assertion that none of the films is 'experimental' in the usual sense of being 'esoteric in subject or style'. To some it might be a matter of opinion whether two deaf and dumb men working in the warehouses and barges of the port of London is an esoteric subject for a film. On this it might have been better to hear the opinions of members of the London Dock Workers Union as we ourselves did while we were making it. I myself was left in no doubt that not only was the subject 'esoteric', but from a documentary point of view it was completely impossible. No worker with a physical defect of this kind would be allowed anywhere near the docks. And, apart from this, *Together* (or *The Glass Marble* as it was originally called) was recognised by us and by the British Film Institute as an 'experimental' film, whatever the authors of the pamphlet cared to say in denial; and the money was given to us by the Experimental Film Committee chiefly because we proposed to experiment with the sound-track. What becomes then of the statement that none of the films was experimental in the sense of being esoteric in subject or style? It was clear that this was Anderson's attempt to gloss over the fact that *Together* was not a documentary film and had never been intended as one. Had he allowed attention to dwell on the differences in subject and style between *Together* and the other two films, he would at the same time have destroyed the alleged harmony of the Free Cinema movement. And by the time the public and the critics could judge for themselves just how far *Together* was esoteric in style (from the editing style alone it is impossible to know whether some sequences are intended as real or imagined), Anderson's 'movement' had received enough publicity through "Sight and Sound" and the general press and on television to

make it acceptable as a genuine phenomenon like the Angry Young Man movement with which, for reasons that were not altogether unconnected with Tony Richardson's association with Free Cinema and his direction of "The Angry Young Man" at the Royal Court theatre, it later became identified and enabled Anderson to present himself as the angry young man of the British cinema.

Anderson might retort at this point that even if a genuine movement did not really exist at the time the manifesto was published he nevertheless helped to create one, and that he was justified in doing so, even by means of such glib and calculated appeals to sensationalism as those of the manifesto and later efflorescences like the article 'Stand Up! Stand Up!' in "Sight and Sound": if only because the swooning condition of British commercial cinema, with its accent on conformism and box-office security, deserved a slap in the face which would bring it back to a sense of reality. He could argue with Voltaire that even if there were no God, it would have been necessary to invent one. He could claim the value of the publicity as a stimulus. He could point to the queues as evidence of latent appetites awakened. By creating the mere conditions for movement in the cinema he was fulfilling the role of prime-mover.

These arguments would be valid if Free Cinema really had gone on to justify its promises. No doubt the British Film Institute, which has several reputable critics and writers on its staff, took the view at the time that the end justifies the means. It was only when on the material level of actual film production Free Cinema collapsed out of sheer inertia that the Institute withdrew the facilities it had first provided, realising that the public could not be asked to queue indefinitely to see productions of a British film movement which consisted mainly of experimental or documentary films from Europe and America. As soon as the Free Cinema programmes at the National Film Theatre were stopped the academic movement — which was all it had ever really been — was decorously brought to an end by Anderson after a debate at the Institute which accorded the 'movement' its funeral honours. This debate was nothing more than a face-saver for Anderson who was thus given the opportunity of associating the brief life of his brain-child with the established and reputable documentary producers who took part in the discussion of the reasons for the movement's failure, allowing Anderson to arrive in his characteristically avuncular style at the overwhelming conclusion that the movement failed owing to the 'indifference of the younger generation of film-makers'. In fact the only generation that had ever existed was an odd fermentation in the mind of Anderson himself who had been his own midwife, nurse and undertaker.

The argument that Free Cinema, as an academic movement, injected some life into the British commercial cinema would have to be sustained by the naming of at least one film which was subsequently made to the Free Cinema formula, as far as it was possible to understand it. It is quite possible that the

public interest in the first Free Cinema programme at the National Film Theatre may have drawn the attention of commercial producers to the possibilities of films featuring such unorthodox characters as Teddy-boys, dockworkers, and fun-fair addicts. But this would have happened even if the programme had been entitled Three Films. For it was obvious that the crowds who went to the National Film Theatre to see *Together*, *O Dreamland* and *Momma Don't Allow* would have queued up again to see films which dealt with their familiar world in an exciting way. They did not come to see the Free Cinema movement, but the films. And they did not come to see the films because they had read the Free Cinema manifesto, but because they had heard about them in the daily press, and because they had already seen extracts of *Together* on television and because they had seen and heard an east end parson accuse its makers of 'misrepresenting the children of the east end'. And all this was no doubt brought to the attention of the producers and led to the favourable acceptance by the Film Finance Corporation of our proposal to make a full-length British feature film about Teddy-boys. But after its rejection by the British censor this film was never made.

It is therefore clear that the 'movement' was an irrelevant factor in whatever influence the success of *Together* had upon the commercial producers. In other respects Free Cinema proved to be more hindrance than help in such publicity as it had received in relation to making commercial films. Doubtless the insistence on the 'fact' (page one of the manifesto) that none of the films was experimental in the sense of being esoteric in subject or style was intended for the eye of some enterprising producer who might have been prepared to take a risk on a fresh approach in commercial conditions, providing there was nothing 'cranky' about it. In fact, in the only brief note I received from Anderson during his editing of the film while I was absent on other work in Rome, he underlined this point in trying to override my objections to Free Cinema. In view of such a calculated approach it is all the more difficult to understand how he could have handled the editing of our film with such striking indifference to professional standards that at some points it gave an impression of surrealism. For example, during the Sunday-dinner sequence the clatter of knives and forks on plates is clearly audible while the landlady's voice is not. Professional producers and distributors put this down to one of three causes: incompetence, incompleteness (for whatever reason), or deliberate concentration on an effect for its own sake which was not justified by the scene, in other words 'deliberate crankiness'. How was Anderson able to prepare a movement with one eye on its commercial possibilities and at the same time subject the most striking of the three films to a cutting and sound treatment in flat contradiction to his aims? There can be only one explanation of this. Anderson included *Together* in his Free Cinema movement without really believing in its commercial possibilities. His cavalier

treatment of the editing, taken in conjunction with the statement that 'none of the films was esoteric in subject or style', showed that he really pinned his faith on the two shorter films which were made and edited with professional precision.

The success of *Together* must have been as much a surprise to him as it was to the Institute, which had earlier had such little faith in it in its silent version — claiming that the story was not dramatically developed — that it put the film on the shelf for nearly nine months. It recognised Lorenza Mazzetti and me as the makers of the film but obstructed my attempt, by forming a non-profit-making company, to put the production on a confident basis at the beginning of the work, when it was stated that the Institute preferred to keep the production 'on a personal basis'. The result was that, while the Institute could regard itself as the producer for the purposes of ownership, in all matters relative to the business side it was able to hold me personally responsible. Thus throughout the film I found myself saddled with incidental claims for compensation as well as with threats of legal action by the people who alleged that their copyrights had been infringed (as in the fun-fair sequence). When I decided to leave England I was the target for three separate legal actions as well as for a variety of other claims indirectly arising out of the production. All my attempts to pass these claims on to the Institute as the owners of the film were referred back to me, and it was owing to my reluctance to return to this situation that I declined to return to finish the editing when at last, some nine months later, the Institute decided to complete it. It was at this point that I wrote inviting Lindsay Anderson to supervise the editing of the sound, and Lorenza Mazzetti returned with a complete editing script for his guidance. Anderson, however, refused to look at the script and made it a condition that he should have a free hand in the editing. As I never received any information from Anderson about the progress of the film from the moment he was appointed editor until it appeared on the screen I had known nothing of the conditions he had imposed, and I would not have agreed to them if I had.

My own experience of trying to distribute the film in Italy and Germany has clearly shown that Anderson's inconsistency of editing is the chief reason why it is next to impossible to find normal distribution for it. Exhibitors in Italy have offered to put the film in general distribution if the obvious defects are remedied, but this is impossible to perform as, for some reason or another, all the negatives discarded by Anderson have been destroyed.

Hence Free Cinema neither helped to make other films within the scope of a more ambitious professional production, nor was it helpful in enabling the success of the Free Cinema programme to be translated into the active interest of distributors at a professional level. If this had been Anderson's intention when he allowed the Free Cinema manifesto to be circulated, it was obviously self-defeated. He had gambled on

Right: East End morning: Denis Horne's and Lorenza Mazzetti's *Together*.

the spotlight's falling on his own productions, but when instead the main critical attention was focussed on *Together*, in which from the commercial point of view there were serious defects in technique and in which not only the subject but also the style of editing was frankly peculiar, any immediate hope of breaking into the charmed circle of professional film directors proved to be somewhat illusory. On the academic level Free Cinema had provided him with a platform and a banner and a string of disciples at the British Film Institute. He had the freedom of the National Film Theatre and the Institute's magazine "Sight and Sound". But as far as professional cinema was concerned, only the makers of *Together* would have been asked to tea in Wardour Street, and then only to have explained to them how far their film came short of the standards expected. From Anderson's point of view, it was at this stage that Free Cinema began to collapse. He had never intended it to become a merely literary activity, and it must have been frustrating for him to find that one of the side-effects of his 'movement' was to drive him more and more into the pages of "Sight and Sound", "Encounter" and "The Observer", merely to try and keep the 'movement' going at a practical level and to justify himself to the British Film Institute which had provided the facilities. From here it was a short step to being forced to adopt the pose of the angry young man of the British cinema, and to come out into the open aiming verbal darts at the Goliath of British film production.

Although there is not a page of the Free Cinema manifesto which does not contain some misrepresentation of the facts, or evident contradiction, or absurd irrelevance which would lead the most charitable schoolmaster confronted to write comments in red, it would be a mistake to underrate the intentions of the authors. In fact, the pamphlet was aimed with great circumspection at several audiences at once, and it was sure to hit them all. The words 'the directors are all critics' were aimed at establishing the principle for English critics that good critics make good films, as in France. That 'the directors are all graduates' was a sop to the British Film Institute, "Encounter" and "The Universities and Left Review". The statement that 'none of the films was esoteric in subject or style' was a friendly pat on the shoulder to reassure potential backers of future films. The fact that none of these statements was true might lead the schoolmaster on second thoughts to write 'knave'. But looking then at the pamphlet he would see that it bore the name Alex Jacobs, of whose capacity he knew nothing. As usual Anderson had a perfect alibi, and he would undoubtedly say that he had had no time to supervise the pamphlet thoroughly.

Although there is little to be learnt from a post-mortem on a still-born baby, it is instructive to consider for a moment how the Free Cinema hoax came to be received, at least at the beginning, with such



seriousness, not only by English film critics but by those in France and Italy. As far as the English critics were concerned, the acceptance of the Free Cinema manifesto was due to a genuine ignorance of the people and production methods associated with the films. There seemed no reason why a pamphlet drawn up by 'university graduates' should not be accepted at its face value however low in the critical scale it might be. The deliberate subordination of creative film-making and of the facts concerning it to the presentation of a pre-arranged picture with the object of obtaining publicity on an international scale would not have been suspected by the most machiavellian of English critics; and they reacted generously to what they imagined was a fresh-faced and fresh-hearted current of university-cradled creative talent which would do the jaded old British cinema a world of good. Some critics were roused to enthusiasm by the political associations of the word 'free', and the prospect of manning the barricades against the moguls of Dean Street led the "New Statesman" critic William Whitebait into the extravagant observation that *Together* was a 'revolution in the British cinema'. To others 'free', as in its use in the phrase 'free-thought', was a challenge to orthodoxy, or an invitation to erotic abandon as in 'free-love'. This gave Anderson's 'movement' unexpected powers of suggestion. Free Cinema was welcomed with open arms by Dilys Powell of the "Sunday Times" who saw in it the childhood of the cinema freed from adult corruption, a world of innocence and charm, and Whitebait was induced to see the longed-for rise of the anarchist camera, wandering scriptlessly around a world of idealised actuality on the model of Italian neo-realism. For the critics of "Sight and Sound" it represented the happy prospect of films echoing the far-off thunder of Eisenstein or the garrulous infinites of Ford all made, if not 'for free', at least on shoe-string budgets which liberated their makers from all consideration of box-office, distributor and producer. And there was also the ever-present flavour of anti-conformism to which I have referred.

The acceptance of Free Cinema by foreign critics has a more direct explanation and was due almost entirely to Anderson's excellent public-relations organ-

ization. Anderson's wooing of the critics took two forms: of direct personal contact, invitations for example to Louis Marcorelles of "Les Cahiers du Cinema" to visit him as his guest in London and, indirectly through the pages of "Sight and Sound", which he took care was regularly in the hands of all foreign critics of note; as well, by word of mouth through emissaries of the British Film Institute. For example, Signor Piero Pineschi, head of Italian Cinema Public Relations, was informed during a telephone call by Derek Prouse of the British Film Institute that *Together* was the unaided work of a young Italian girl in London, and he was asked to present a picture to the Italian press of a feminine Rossellini who had not only written and directed but also produced her own film. As I chanced to be in Signor Pineschi's office at the time, talking about other matters, I then had the strange experience of listening to an excited description in Italian of a wonderful new film that had been made in London by an Italian girl, which, I was told, was to be sent to the Cannes festival as England's only experimental offering. Did I know anything about it or the girl? When I explained my own share in the film he was not unnaturally both puzzled and embarrassed. The British Film Institute is regarded highly in Italy, not the least because of its open championing of Italian neo-realist films, and it seemed incredible that a member of the Institute should put over a deliberate publicity stunt. The explanation was that Prouse had no first-hand knowledge of the film and had relied on Lindsay Anderson for his 'facts'. It does the Italian cinema press no discredit to say that it duly whooped up this garbled version, and I then had the stranger experience of reading front-page articles in national Italian papers figuring my little Italian colleague as a Colossus of the British cinema, a Zavattini, de Sica and Rossellini all rolled into one. She almost came to represent the liberation of the Italian woman, and her descent on Great Britain and taking of the British Film Institute by storm was put over almost as though it were the start of a second Roman invasion. Even now many of the young, frustrated documentary directors of Italy pin their hopes of eventual liberty on the British Film Institute and openly talk of their plans to escape to England, like Lorenza Mazzetti, in the fond hope that they will receive the same glorious publicity and opportunities.

Anderson's object in presenting *Together* as the sole work of an Italian girl was not only to obtain such desirable publicity for a member of the Free Cinema movement, but also to pave the way for the introduction of his own documentary films to foreign audiences. In all this he might have succeeded but when the British Film Institute acceded to my protests and withdrew the film from circulation in the Free Cinema programme and assigned to me its exclusive distribution in Italy the international publicity stunt flopped.

Taking an overall view of Anderson's activities in the Free Cinema fiasco, one is amazed at the amount

of sheer misspent energy and ingenuity. If Anderson had contributed one tenth of the talent he showed in political manoeuvring to the purely creative side of film-making it is even possible that his Free Cinema might, in the end, have been of some practical help and effectiveness in getting other 'nouvelle vague' films into production, which might have justified the assertion that a movement really existed. As it was Anderson displayed, not only in his handling of *Together* but in subsequent attempts to get the film about Teddy-boys into production no creative insight whatever. It was obvious that he was temperamentally incapable at that time of thinking in purely creative terms and was so limited in his imaginative approach that the best one could expect from him as contribution in the making of a film was an appreciation of its documentary qualities. He was not, however, prepared to stay within his limitations, and his insistence on working as associate director in the proposed Teddy-boy film, although Lorenza Mazzetti wanted to continue to work with me on the film I had written, defeated all attempts on my part to associate with him on a realistic level. I proposed turning Free Cinema into a production company in which all concerned in the 'movement' could take part, but he claimed he was too busy on 'other projects', and that Tony Richardson likewise could not spare the time from his theatre activities to take part. Thus while advertising the 'movement' in public Anderson was putting the brake on it in private. In the meantime he made sporadic forays against the 'paternalism' of the British censorship, using completely unknown 'writers' as decoy-ducks, and claiming that they were the victims of a censorial tyranny which prevented them from being known. This is the familiar Anderson on his intellectual high-horse riding furiously in print against the biggest windmill on the horizon. By now the horse, like Rosinante, is getting rather thin, and even fellow critics must be starting to wonder whether Anderson can be taken seriously. For it was really Anderson's paternalistic approach to film-making that led to the rise and fall of Free Cinema, which was never really more than a private movement for the emancipation of Lindsay Anderson.

Anderson's 'freedom' consisted in filming actuality and then, directly, by means of a 'free' sound column expressing a personal point of view about it, or by means of 'free' editing, suggesting ideas and attitudes which would not be present in a straightforward presentation of things as they are. There was nothing new, of course, in this treatment of documentary material. It is the method of *The Battleship Potemkin* and also of *Nuit et Brouillard* which was actually included in one of the Free Cinema programmes. It is the method of several Italian left-wing documentaries. In one of these dealing with the imprisonment of Matteotti the camera roams around the empty room

where he spent some of his last years, and all the interest is in the sound column which reproduces the sounds of movement, the scratchings of pen on paper, the sighs of the invisible prisoner and the long silences as one imagines him gazing through the barred window. Perhaps a better term for this type of evocative film would be 'creative documentary', but it would come within the scope of Free Cinema if only because the director is at liberty to treat his documentary material in whatever way he likes, and this inevitably means in the long run that he must express an attitude which is fundamentally a moral, social or political point of view. All such attitudes are in essence propagandist. We do not preach a moral unless we wish as many people as possible to be reformed, nor do we make films about the blind if we do not want to extend our social interest to as many as can hear: no politician has ever gone on to a platform content with the size of his audience. That is why, to me at least, Free Cinema was propaganda cinema, even if the intentions of a director were merely to express his 'personal point of view'. This is borne out by the fact that all the 'personal documentary' films have a high propaganda value, not only for various social and moralist groups, but for political parties as well. As long as it can be taken as a documentary, *Together* is a favourite with the Communists in Europe. The East Germans seized it and refused to part with it for six months. The Italian Communists have shown it at a Communist-dominated film festival, and I have been asked by a member of the Chinese (Communist) diplomatic delegation here in Rome to send a (shortened) copy to China. The shortening would probably require the elimination of what few elements of the story were left by Anderson.

Free Cinema was still-born simply because there are no film-makers in England who are prepared to treat documentary material with a firm moral, social or political view. This is what Anderson meant by being 'committed'. To try and breathe life into his movement he was driven to the expedient of giving it a poetic injection by means of a film which was a-moral, a-social and non-political.

Of course the intrusion of a 'personal point of view' in documentary material can only be tolerated if

it corresponds with a considerable body of public opinion. Nobody would sit through a documentary about deaf children if the director made it plain that in his opinion it was a waste of time trying to help them. In *Thursday's Children* Anderson expressed the normal humane view that handicapped children can be helped to overcome their disabilities. Nor would any cinema dare to show *Nuit et Brouillard* if its point of view had implied that German atrocities against the Jews were the efficient expression of a justified hatred. Where the subject-matter itself makes a strong appeal to the mind and evokes normal reactions of pity, horror or disgust, the 'personal point of view' is an intrusion without justification. On the other hand, for a subject which might appeal in different ways to different people, the assertion of a particular point of view may be of added interest.

It was the weakness of Anderson's abortive movement that there are no English documentary subjects of sufficiently powerful appeal, one way or the other, and that in consequence he was reduced to treating innocuous material, like a Margate fun-fair, with the humourless fury of a Dean Swift flaying the Yahoos. It was natural that Anderson in reacting against the spick and span platitudes of commercial documentary should look back nostalgically to the sentimental patriotism of Humphrey Jennings and, failing to revive it, turn somewhat peevishly on the working classes in the hope of finding the march to a greater England where in spite of his clothes a man was a man for a' that. But in the petty business of everyday living in the Welfare State he could find nothing which would go with the brave music of a military band except, perhaps, the march to Aldermaston. What had proved effective in the war years was lost in the peace. Anderson found that the working class would not behave in epic ways and that no amount of martial music over northern slag heaps would have the effect of John Gielgud's Shakespearean couplets over the bomb ruins of London. The sentiments of *Roll Out the Barrel* and *The Lambeth Walk* would not be translated to the cold climate of the uninspired and dingy pleasures of the Welfare State. It is a paradox that my little Italian colleague could see so much that had its own, silent music, and that both she and I, largely as a result of having our film presented by Free Cinema, were prevented from expressing it.